

Pennsylvania Canal Lockkeeper's House
Hartslog Street
Alexandria
Huntingdon County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5406

HABS
PA
31-ALEX,
23-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
PENNSYLVANIA CANAL LOCKKEEPER'S HOUSE

HABS No. PA-5406

Location: On the southeast corner of Hartslog Street and Shelton Avenue, Alexandria, Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania.

Present Owner: Warren and Rebecca Itinger.

Present Use: Single-family dwelling.

Significance: This structure was the only lockkeeper's house constructed in Alexandria, where the lockkeeper was responsible for two locks, No. 49 and No. 50, which flanked the dwelling. It is also the only building constructed at an angle to the regular street grid, to accommodate the canal path, which it originally fronted. As such, it is the single-most important building in the context of canal maintenance in Alexandria.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: ca. 1832.
2. Original and subsequent owners: The house is located on lot No. 20, the corner of Hartslog Street and the canal, thence by the line formerly of the canal N 68° W 60' to a post, thence S 32° W 97.5' to Shelton Avenue. Thence S 68° E 60' by Shelton Avenue to the corner of Hartslog Street, and by Hartslog Street N 32° E 97.5' to the beginning.

The following is an incomplete chain of title to the land on which the structure stands. Reference is to the Recorder of Deeds Office of the County of Huntingdon, Pennsylvania.

1835 Deed December 30, 1835, recorded in Volume Y1, Page 321.

Robert McClelland

TO

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

1875 Deed December 31, 1875, recorded in Volume X3, Page 402.

Pennsylvania Canal Company

TO

William P. Robison.

1876 Deed May 19, 1876, recorded in Volume X3, Page 404.

William P. Robison

TO

John H. Robinson.

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1890 Deed September 15, 1890, recorded in Volume Y3, Page 230.

John H. Robinson

TO

William M. Phillips.

1903 Deed June 24, 1903, recorded in Volume W4, Page 232.

William M. Phillips

TO

George A. Trimmer.

1909-50 The building was occupied by various owners as a dwelling.

1950 Deed April 25, 1950, recorded in Volume X8, Page 33.

Walter C. Feagley

TO

Warren and Rebecca Itinger.

3. Original plans and construction: No original plans or drawings have been located. Old photographs and present condition indicate that the house was originally two stories tall with a front-facing gable; the front door was set in the western corner of the south facade, looking south and fronting the canal. The interior may have been a side-hall plan, two rooms deep.
4. Alterations and additions: At some point the front door was installed in the west facade, reorienting the house to face Hartslog Street. Another door stands in the northeast corner of the second story on the gable end, facing northeast. This probably dates to the original construction and accessed a porch that was once attached to the rear of the house. A two-story shed addition with a brick chimney was also amended to the southeast corner of the building.

A one-story wood porch wraps around the south, west, and north facades. A frame porch with a Victorian balustrade once extended across the front facade, depicted in an early, undated photograph as a partial, dropped or extended roof on the south facade.

A one-story wood garage measuring 27' x 13' has been added to the northeast corner of the building. An above-ground swimming pool is situated south of the house.

Remnants of a stone foundation exist on the northeast corner of the building, which extend east approximately 10'. A late-nineteenth century photograph reveals a ridge chimney that no longer exists.

- B. Historical Context: The house was undoubtedly erected by the Pennsylvania Canal Company after it obtained deed to the land in 1835, gable-front oriented to accommodate the canal's diagonal alignment through Alexandria. No other building in town violates the rectangular town grid. The occupant of this company-owned, rent-free house was responsible for two locks, No. 49 and No. 50, one on either side of Hartslog Street north of the alley between First and Second streets.

Census records identify some of the resident locktenders. In 1850 it was W. Mealy, 53; a decade later a young man aged 17, Thomas Madow, tended the locks. In 1870 the last locktender listed is Perry Robinson, 58, who is most likely William P. Robinson, the last owner of the house.

In 1875, after the canal closed, the house became a private residence. William Phillips, a grain-buyer and commission merchant from York, Pennsylvania, came to Alexandria; prior to acquiring the house--which had lacked a lockkeeper for fifteen years in 1890--he was a leading citizen in Alexandria. In 1862 he was engaged in merchandising from the Charlton Building, and by 1868 Phillips was a leading merchant in the county. In 1868-69 he served as secretary of the Alexandria school board, and was its treasurer in 1881 (Africa, 427).

Phillips was politically active, as well. In 1861, 1864-65, and 1879, he was a town burgess (Africa, 431). He lived in the former Odd Fellows lodge (HABS No. PA-5398), though he owned other properties in town, including the lockkeeper's house.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The house is gable-end, two-story, of frame with two bays on the short (formerly main) facade and three bays on the long (presently main) facade.
2. Condition of the fabric: Fair, with numerous additions and alterations.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The building is an L-plan, taking into account three additions: the main block is 32' by 18'; the shed, 20' by 12'; and the garage, 27' by 13'.
2. Foundations: Stone and brick.
3. Wall construction: Frame with horizontal siding.
4. Structural system, framing: Wood frame.
5. Porches: A one-story, 7'-deep frame porch wraps around the north, south, and west facades. A partial porch on the south facade no longer exists.
6. Chimneys: One chimney is located on the east end of the shed addition on the east wall, in the northeast corner of the house.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The original front facade was the south facade,

facing the canal. That wood door is now the southwest bay; the present front door is located in the southern bay of the west facade.

- b. Windows: One-over-one-light wood sash; no shutters. Two windows on the second story, and two or three on the first story.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Originally a gable front; now a side-facing gable with asphalt shingles.
- b. Cornice: Wood boxed cornice.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. First floor: A living room occupies the full width of the south wall. A second room extends from the center to the north wall, which serves as the present hall. At the back of this room is the stairway to the second floor. The kitchen is located in the northeast frame addition.
- 2. Stairways: The main, wood stairway rises a few treads up to the east, then turns with a landing and rises along the east wall, north.
 - 3. Wall and ceiling finish: Plastered.
 - 4. Doorways and doors: Two first-floor doors and one on the second story.

D. Site:

- 1. General setting: The house is situated in what is now a predominantly residential area. Originally, however, an inn was across Hartslog Street to the west; the Presbyterian Church was built across the street to the north; to the south was the canal bed, and beyond that, the library; to the east is another residence. All except the library are contemporary to this building.
- 2. Landscaping, enclosures: There is a sizeable side yard north of the house. A gravel driveway leads to the garage from Shelton Avenue.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Old views (in Hartslog Heritage, 34).
- B. Primary and unpublished sources:

Porter Township tax records, 1819 to 1859, Huntingdon County Historical Society.

Alexandria Borough tax records, 1859 to 1873, Huntingdon County Historical Society and Huntingdon County Courthouse.

Huntingdon County Deed Books and Probate Records, Huntingdon County Courthouse, Huntingdon, Pennsylvania.

Huntingdon County Tax Map -- Alexandria, 01-02-26.

Huntingdon County Historical Society survey sheets.

HAER Inventory.

C. Secondary and published sources:

Africa, J. Simpson. History of Huntingdon and Blair Counties, Pennsylvania. Philadelphia: Louis H. Everts, 1883.

Harshbarger, Jean P., Nancy R. Taylor, Sara H. Zabriskie and F.R. Zabriskie. Hartslog Heritage. State College, Pennsylvania: K-B Offset Printing, Inc., 1975.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was conducted by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record in cooperation with the America's Industrial Heritage Project under the directorship of Randy Cooley; AIHP is an undertaking of the National Park Service, based in Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania. Recorded under the direction of Robert J. Kapsch, chief of HABS/HAER, the project was completed during summer 1988 at the HABS field office in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. Project leader was Alison K. Hoagland, senior HABS historian; field supervisor was Dorothy Burlingame, University of Vermont; project historian, Karen Genskow, Sangamon State University. Large-format photography is by David Ames. Editing of the final report was done by Sara Amy Leach, HABS historian.

This report was completed as part of a larger project documenting two canal towns--Saltsburg, on the Western Division of the Pennsylvania Mainline Canal, and Alexandria, on the Juniata Division--flanking the Allegheny Divide. Twenty-one reports on other buildings in Alexandria, an overview history of Alexandria (HABS No. PA-5407), and of canal town development in Pennsylvania (HABS No. PA-5666) are part of the HABS/HAER collection. Twenty-two reports on buildings in Saltsburg (Indiana County) and an overview history of Saltsburg (HABS No. PA-5438) are also available. Results of the project were published as Two Historic Pennsylvania Canal Towns: Alexandria and Saltsburg, Sara Amy Leach, editor (Washington, DC: Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, National Park Service, March 1989).